Parent Council Training Workbook

Safe and Sound Schools
INTRODUCTION

WELCOME!

Parents have been asking how to get involved. Safe and Sound Schools created the Parents for Safe Schools program for those who are seeking ideas on how to connect with and support local school initiatives. For those who want to do more - reach further - mentor others - the Safe and Sound Schools Parent Council is for you.

The SASS Parent Council is an exclusive structured education program to empower and prepare participants to advocate for school safety with authority and credibility. This elite program gives selected parents and caregiver volunteers from across the country training, tools, resources, and certification so they can become effective advocates of safer schools in and beyond their communities.

Course Objectives:

• Inspire you with ideas about how you can develop your own safety solutions for your school community.
• Provide activities and homework assignments designed to complement your online training sessions and help guide you through the process of creating a solid safety plan/program and how to bring it to life.
• Understand the full spectrum of comprehensive school safety topics and apply them to your safety planning.
• Teach you the foundation for grant writing and fundraising for school safety programs or projects.

School safety is not one person’s responsibility, it is all of our responsibility. Together, we can make our schools safe and sound. Let’s get started.
Safe and Sound Schools

We were inspired to found Safe and Sound Schools following the loss of our daughters who died tragically in the Sandy Hook School Shootings on December 14, 2012. Sandy Hook Elementary School was a place of love, learning, and acceptance. We chose to raise our families in Newtown, Connecticut, a small town where crime is low and values are strong. When our children boarded their school buses and their teachers left for work on December 14th, we never imagined that it might be for the last time.

We all felt safe in our peaceful town and in our high-ranking schools. We learned, too painfully, that we were not. Gaining entry to our locked school—and access to our beloved children and teachers—was as simple as breaking a glass window.

The measures, plans, and procedures we relied upon failed us, tragically.

Despite our sorrow, we were united in our conviction to protect our schools by providing them with both safety and security. We have collaborated with school communities across the country and are joined by national school safety experts, mental health, fire, and law enforcement professionals, to provide a safe place for our children and educators.

Our Mission

Our mission is to support school crisis prevention, response, and recovery, and to protect every school and every student, every day.

We have always — and only — focused on school safety. We are firm in our mission and firm in our resolve, and we will continue to provide research-based education, tools, and resources to ensure the safest possible learning environment for the youth of our nation.

Our Approach

At Safe & Sound Schools, we advocate a collaborative, community-wide approach to school safety. We believe that, by joining together, we can be safer together and can provide a truly comprehensive approach to school safety. By including the perspectives and expertise of all community members—from students and emergency responders to educators and parents—we can improve the safety of our schools and the future of our communities.
Comprehensive School Safety

What do we mean when we say comprehensive school safety? Comprehensive school safety refers to preparedness strategies which address all hazards. Schools must consider all areas of school safety relevant to their site and community and remember to include representatives from each stakeholder group when creating a fully developed safety plan.

Mental and Behavioral Health

Strong mental and behavioral health resources and programs are critical to a safe school environment. Learn more about how community and school-based mental health providers, multi-disciplinary threat assessment teams, and mental & behavioral health resources can help ensure and enhance your school’s safety.

Health and Wellness

From allergy care to trauma care, to spotting signs of abuse or neglect, to promoting healthy nutrition and physical activity, to stress management and self care, promoting the health and wellness of our school community can help us build healthier, safer, and more successful learning environments.
SESSION 1

RESOURCES

Physical Environment

Ensuring physical safety requires knowledge of building use, infrastructure & design, safety & security, impacts of weather and natural disaster, and the tools & technology available to help us. Learn more about creating naturally protective buildings and campuses to ensure the safety of your school community.

Culture, Climate, & Community

Creating a safe and welcoming environment is essential to the safety and success of a school community. Explore resources and programs that foster understanding, build relationships, and strengthen your school’s culture, climate & community engagement.

School Law, Policy, & Finance

Maintaining school safety includes adhering to federal, state and local laws and regulations. In this section, explore resources to help your school community stay current and compliant with codes and laws such as FERPA, ADA, fire, and IDEA, and plan for the continual costs associated with keeping current for safety.

Operations and Emergency Management

The policies, protocols, and practices that support safety in day-to-day activity through times of crisis are the cornerstones of school safety. From bus safety to reunification, and prevention through recovery, learn more about how strong operations and emergency management build a safer school community.

In order for you to be an effective safety leader in your school community, you must understand all the areas encompassing school safety. The Parent Council training will be taking a closer look at comprehensive school safety with the intent to prepare you to propose, plan, and develop safety solutions.
COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL SAFETY ACTIVITY

Instructions

To learn more about comprehensive school safety, visit https://www.safeandsoundschools.org/resource-library/ on our website to find resources under each topic. You will find programs, literature, infographics, experts, and organizations that can help you understand each topic more fully. Browse through the page and see what stands out to you. You might discover a new topic or program that is perfect for your school community.

Write about three topics that inspire you and document which resources you found that were the most helpful. This activity will help you begin to build your own resource library you can pull from as you develop your own school ideas.

Topic One:

Topic Two:

Topic Three:
Straight-A Safety Improvement

We think the best results are achieved through a **three-step process** to improve school safety that we call “The Straight-A’s.”

Often times, after a school based tragedies or traumatic emergency has occurred, there is a knee jerk reaction by neighboring school communities to quickly “do something” to better improve the safety of their school. The Straight-A’s model is designed to slow that process down; to help you avoid “band-aid” solutions, and instead provide you with the insight needed to be strategic and thoughtful with your response, which helps you avoid falling victim to the “one-and-done” mentality. **School safety is a continuous process** that should be challenged and tested often to ensure the system is working.

### Assess

The first step in any project is to understand the broader context. In the Assess phase, you meet with school leaders to learn about your school’s safety plans, policies, and needs. Collaborate with these stakeholders to identify resources and materials you can appropriately share with your council members. Together you will identify which areas work well and which pieces may benefit from a service project.

### Act

During the Act phase, you choose a current safety issue at your school and create a plan of action to address or improve it. This will involve brainstorming; collaborating with school administrators and school stakeholders; making an Action Plan; and implementing the plan.

### Audit

To Audit is to self-evaluate how a project has gone. End the year by looking back on your work; to discuss and note what went well and what could have gone better; and to evaluate the impact of your project upon the safety of the school community. Your audit should include input from your school stakeholders, principal/administrator, and local safety professionals. Note any successes and adjustments to inform the work you do for the next year.
Instructions

Open the Straight-A Safety Improvement resource and familiarize yourself with its offerings. In each section (assess, act, audit), write down three tools that you could utilize in your school community. Then take the time to brainstorm ideas in which you could apply these applications into your school. To download the toolkit, visit [http://www.safeandsoundschools.org/resources/toolkits/](http://www.safeandsoundschools.org/resources/toolkits/).

Straight-A Safety Improvement Model

**ASSESS Tools:**

1. 

2. 

3. 

**ACT Tools:**

1. 

2. 

3. 

**AUDIT Tools:**

1. 

2. 

3.
The State of School Safety Report

In 2018, Safe and Sound Schools conducted an online survey to explore perceptions of safety at schools among four stakeholder groups: parents of students; students in middle school, high school, or college; educators (teachers and other professionals working in schools); and the public at large.

This report shares perspectives and trends from the survey, as well as from our work with school safety stakeholders, on topics such as:

- Perceptions of safety preparedness at schools.
- Opinions of stakeholders surveyed on topics such as feeling safe at school or worrying about the safety of students when they are at school.
- Perceptions of safety threats, from threats received, to perceived threats, and threats expected at their schools in the future.
- Stakeholder knowledge of school-safety team members and those accountable for school safety.
- Opinions about capabilities to improve school safety, including perceived expertise, training, finances, communication, and next steps.

The survey results, combined with our findings working with national experts, school administrators, teachers, support staff, school-based mental health and wellness professionals, students, teachers, and public safety experts, illustrate several issues we need to address in school safety.

The 2019 survey, currently in development, will build on the findings from 2018. We will be sharing the findings with you later this year. In the meantime, we will ask you to take the anonymous survey, and share it with as many people in your community so we can capture as many responses as possible.

The 2018 survey can serve as a conversation starter in your community. For example, calling out some key findings in an email to a stakeholder, or sharing some findings in a PTA newsletter. You can also use the survey findings to frame a discussion comparing local perceptions with the national survey. If you are really intrigued by this report, you can run your own survey in your community to dive deeper into perceptions by local educators, caregivers, students, and community members.
### STATE OF SCHOOL SAFETY ACTIVITY

**Instructions**

When it comes time to build a school safety proposal, using data and statistics to support your solution is imperative. Look through the State of School Safety Report and pull out statistics you feel strengthen your idea. Write out down your findings so you have access to them when you are developing your safety proposal.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistics:</th>
<th>Application:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PART TWO: PROGRAMS

Safe and Sound Youth Council (SSYC)

The Safe & Sound Youth Council is a nationwide network of motivated students who share a passion to provide safer and more secure schools for one another, their educators, and their communities. We have seen in the past few years how powerful the voice of our students can be. The program is meant to encourage our youth to explore their school safety ideas and provide them with the roadmap to create real change. We designed the Safe & Sound Youth Council to help:

**DISCUSSION**
Initiate and sustain discussions about school safety

**AWARENESS**
Foster awareness about the roles students can play in creating safer schools

**SERVICE PROJECTS**
Design and complete service and awareness projects to improve their schools’ safety preparedness

**PARTNERSHIPS**
Build partnerships with teachers, parents, and community leaders

**PEER ROLE MODELS**
Serve as peer role models by emphasizing the importance of a safe environment for learning and growth

Here is a list of requirements needed to start a SSYC in your community:

- A minimum of four students
- A school staff member to act as your Faculty Advisor
- School approval (you’ll need an administrator to sign the registration form)
- Approval to form a council chapter
- Approval to learn about and discuss the official school safety protocols
- Meeting space

Participation in this program can help students build their confidence and help refine their leadership skills as they develop and execute their own safety service projects. Remember, students have an inside pulse on what is happening in the school, and giving them a seat at the table is vital.
Safety Patrol!

Safety Patrol is a modified version of the SSYC that allows younger students to get involved with school safety, since the SSYC is intended for older students. Note: this program is still in development and we should have it ready for you by the spring.

How the program works:

- Students on the Safety Patrol are asked to observe any safety violations and are encouraged to write them down in a notebook (which you can supply) or on any sheet of paper.
- Students are then given an opportunity to sit with their advisor of the program to report their findings. The advisor can be the principal, assistant principal, school counselor, safety coordinator, school resource officer, or supervising teacher. These meetings can occur when it is most convenient for the advisor. One school who participated in this program had the students rotate having lunch with their advisor to discuss their safety concerns.
- Remember, most students are going to report things that aren’t necessarily safety concerns. However, advisors who take the time to listen will find important information with the safety of students (e.g. bullying and bus safety).

Getting started:

- Students are introduced to the program through an advisor who presents to their classroom the basics of the program, which includes: an introduction to school safety and basic safety terminology.
- The advisor asks students who are interested in signing up to join the Safety Patrol. Remember, the goal is to hear from as many students as possible, so avoid limiting the number of participants if you can.
Parents for Safe Schools

The Parents for Safe Schools program was designed as sister program to the SSYC. The program provides parents with a basic guide to school safety, while providing supplemental resources designed to help parents and caregivers get involved in the safety of their school communities.

About Parents for Safe Schools:

- As parents turned school safety advocates, we realized the critical role parents and caregivers play in school safety.
- Parents for Safe Schools is a free program full of ideas and actionable steps you can take to make a difference in school safety.
- Get involved at any level – learn more about school safety, educate others, build partnerships, or advocate for changes in your community.

As a parent leader in your school community, the Parents for Safe Schools program provides a great way to recruit, educate, and train other parents about school safety. The more parent voices you have standing up for school safety, the better. Talk to your PTA/PTO and see if there is room to join forces. Parents for Safe Schools has been endorsed by the NPTA and works as a sub-committee under their umbrella.
**SESSION 1**

**ACTIVITY D**

## PROGRAM BRAINSTORMING ACTIVITY

### Instructions

Read through the programs on the website and familiarize yourself with the service project ideas in both programs. Write down project ideas that appeal to you and could be beneficial to your school community. Brainstorm ideas for recruiting students or parents who might be interested in participating in the idea.

### Project Ideas 1:

- 
- 
- 
- 

### Project Ideas 2:

- 
- 
- 
- 

### Stakeholder Involvement Ideas 1:

- 
- 
- 
- 

### Stakeholder Involvement Ideas 2:

- 
- 
- 
-
SESSION 1 HOMEWORK

Instructions

To help you synthesize your notes from the activities, answer the following questions:

What are the qualities of a successful school safety project/program? What would a project in your community need to have? Here are some prompts to get you started: partners, funding, communication, management, etc.

Where are the gaps in information about school safety in your community?

Along with the usual stakeholders, who are other champions in your community who have a role to play in school safety?